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Myanmar

*Military Service, Exit, Return
and Rohingya*



Myanmar - Military Service, Exit, Return and Rohingya

This thematic COI report is not, and does not purport to be, a detailed or comprehensive survey of all aspects of the issues addressed. It should thus be weighed against other country of origin information available on the topic.

The report at hand does not include any policy recommendations. The information does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Danish Immigration Service.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

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The Danish Immigration Service
Farimagssvej 51A
4700 Næstved
Denmark

Phone: +45 35 36 66 00
us.dk

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Executive summary

Since the activation of the conscription law in early 2024, a large number of individuals have been recruited for military service in Myanmar. In government-controlled areas, recruitment is systematic and involves arbitrary detentions. Desertion and evasion of military service is considered treason by the authorities and is punished harshly. Avoiding military service by paying a bribe is possible.

The military training is brief and harsh, involving systematic violence and severe punishment for disobedience.

Conscripts are reportedly assigned the most difficult and dangerous duties. They have also been implicated in abuses against civilians. In addition, they are reportedly sent directly to the frontlines upon training.

The military has announced the registration and conscription of women into the military. Reports suggest that some women have been sent to camps for military training. Some reports have alleged that some women in government-controlled areas have been conscripted to military training by force directly from their homes.

Few individuals have returned to Myanmar. There are no mechanisms to ensure the monitoring and protection of returnees in Myanmar, and humanitarian access for international organisations remains restricted.

Stateless Rohingya face strict travel restrictions in Rakhine State and need permission to leave their townships, while access to Yangon International Airport requires Myanmar citizenship. Their ability to obtain official documents is highly limited, and only a few have secured citizenship or ID cards, often through bribes.

Document fraud is prevalent in Myanmar. The prevalence of corruption in Myanmar allows for fake identity documentation to be purchased with relative ease.

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Introduction

This thematic COI report updates information of some of the topics covered in the Danish Immigration Service's (DIS) report on Myanmar published in August 2024. Thus, the report at hand provides updated information on the topics of military service, exit and return procedures as well as the issuance of official ID documents to Rohingya in Myanmar.

The purpose of the report is to provide updated information on the above-mentioned issues relevant for the processing of asylum cases. The report is based on interviews with four sources, based inside and outside Myanmar, with in-depth knowledge, supplemented with information from written sources.

It should be noted that in general, obtaining reliable information about Myanmar is challenging. This difficulty is further exacerbated by the intensification of the armed conflict and the deteriorating security situation in the country, which has continued throughout 2025.

The consulted sources were briefed about the purpose of the interviews and that their statements would be included in a publicly available report. Minutes from the meetings were forwarded to the sources for approval, giving them the opportunity to amend, comment or correct their statements. All four sources approved their statements, which can be found in [Annex 1](#). The sources were referenced in this report according to their own requests.

For the sake of transparency and accuracy, paragraphs in the interview minutes have been given consecutive numbers, which are used in the report when referring to the statements of the sources in the footnotes. The Terms of Reference (ToR) are included in [Annex 2](#).

The report is a synthesis of information obtained from oral and written sources and does not include all details and nuances provided by the sources. In the report, care has been taken to present the views of the sources as accurately and transparently as possible. The individual sources should not be held accountable for the content of the report.

Attention should be called to the changeable and unstable security situation in Myanmar and the fact that the information provided in this report may become outdated. Therefore, the issues addressed in this report should be monitored periodically and brought up to date accordingly.

The report is written in accordance with the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) COI Report Methodology.¹ The research and editing of this report was finalised on 07 November 2025.

The report is available on the website of the DIS, us.dk, and is thus available to all stakeholders in the refugee status determination process as well as to the public.

¹ EUAA, *EUAA Country of Origin Information Report Methodology*, 22 February 2023, [url](#)

Abbreviations

CDM	Civil Disobedience Movement
CHRO	Chin Human Rights Organization
DIS	Danish Immigration Service
DIIS	Danish Institute for International Studies
EUAA	European Union Agency for Asylum
PDF	People's Defence Forces
SAC	State Administration Council
UEC	Union Election Commission

1. Conflict developments in 2024-2025

Anti-government armed groups made significant territorial gains in 2024 and the first half of 2025, prompting heavy retaliation by the Myanmar Armed Forces, primarily through airstrikes and artillery shelling striking populated areas. These strikes killed more civilians during 2024 than in previous years since the 2021 coup d'état by the Myanmar military.²

Fighting was particularly intense in Rakhine State, where the Arakan Army seized the regional military headquarters and multiple bases, reportedly establishing near-total control of the area. Rohingya civilians were frequently caught between the military and the Arakan Army, and were subject to killings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests, torture, mutilation, destruction of villages, and widespread displacement.³ As of July 2025, 14 out of 17 townships were no longer under the control of the Myanmar Armed Forces.⁴

Since the 2021 coup d'etat, the internal conflict between government forces and a plethora of armed resistance and rebel groups has persisted. For more detailed information on the conflict developments in Myanmar since the 2021 coup d'etat, please see Landinfo's and DIS' reports on Myanmar published in 2025, 2024 and 2023.⁵

² OHCHR, *Situation of human rights in Myanmar Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, 16 June 2025, [url](#), p. 3

³ OHCHR, *Situation of human rights in Myanmar Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, 16 June 2025, [url](#), p. 3

⁴ International Organisation: 3-4

⁵ Landinfo, *Temanotat Myanmar, Sikkerhets- og menneskerettighetssituasjonen etter militærkuppet i 2021*, 25 August 2025, [url](#); DIS (Danish Immigration Service), *Myanmar: Security situation, return and military service*, 19 August 2024, [url](#); DIS (Danish Immigration Service), *Myanmar: Security situation*, 8 September 2023, [url](#)

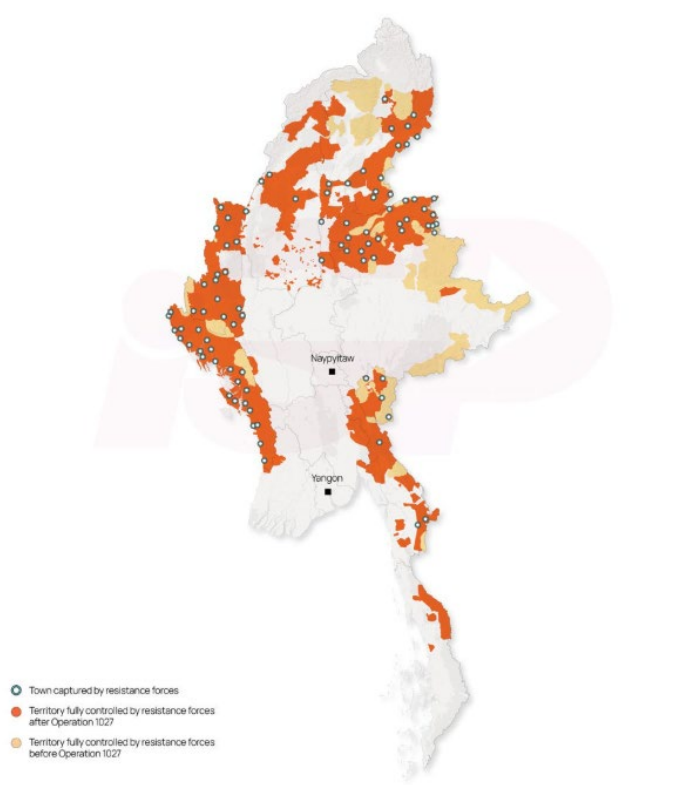


Figure 1: Areas of control in Myanmar as of 20 August 2025. Non-colored areas represent government-controlled areas in Myanmar.⁶

⁶ ISP, *Resistance Forces' Control Areas Expanded*, 2 September 2025, [url](#)

2. Military service in Myanmar since February 2024

2.1. Conscription practices and duration of conscription

On 10 February 2024, the military authorities in Myanmar issued an order that activated the 2010 People's Military Service Law.⁷ According to the law, it is mandatory for all men aged 18-35 and all women aged 18-27 to be drafted into the armed forces for two years. Men aged 18-45 and women aged 18-35 who are classified as experts, such as medical doctors, engineers, technicians, or those belonging to other specialised fields, can be drafted for three years.⁸ In case of state of emergency, the duration of military service can be extended up to five years.⁹

There are no verified figures on the number of people drafted for military service since February 2024. However, according to some estimates, around 70,000 individuals have been drafted for military service since February 2024.¹⁰ As of October 2025, the military has officially acknowledged launching 15 conscription batches, according to the Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO). Each batch was reported to consist of approximately 5,000 recruits, which would total around 75,000. The scale of recruitment for military service may be considerably larger.¹¹

Sources reported that recruitment is systematic in military-controlled areas. In cities, individuals are drafted at *ward level*, which refers to smaller administrative units of urban areas. It has become institutionalised that ward administrative leaders in towns and village administrative leaders in rural areas must ensure that every household is registered, and that the ages of family members are recorded.¹²

Even before the People's Military Service Law was enforced in February 2024, there were reports of forceful recruitment to the military.¹³ According to Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), both young men (for combat roles) and women (for non-combat roles) were recruited by force before 2024.¹⁴

⁷ DFAT, *Country Information Report Myanmar*, 7 April 2025, [url](#), pp. 27-28

⁸ CHRO: 4; Burma Library, *People's Military Service Law/State Peace and Development Council Law No. 27/2010*, 4 November 2010, [url](#)

⁹ Burma Library, *People's Military Service Law/State Peace and Development Council Law No. 27/2010*, 4 November 2010, [url](#)

¹⁰ The Irrawaddy, *Myanmar Junta Deploying Conscripts in Major Push to Reclaim Lost Territory*, 10 July 2025, [url](#); CHRO: 1

¹¹ CHRO: 1

¹² Helene Kyed DIIS: 1

¹³ DFAT, *Country information report Myanmar*, 7 April 2025, [url](#), p. 28; OHCHR, *Situation of human rights in Myanmar; Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar*, Thomas H. Andrews (26 February–5 April 2024) [A/HRC/55/65], 20 March 2024, [url](#), para. 40

¹⁴ DFAT, *Country information report Myanmar*, 7 April 2025, [url](#), p. 28

Since the activation of the conscription law in February 2024, civilians are increasingly being taken and arbitrarily detained, sometimes from their own homes, to be conscripted.¹⁵ Travellers and passersby are being stopped, taken away, and conscripted into the military. In some cases, with the threat of conscription, people are extorted for money. Individuals currently imprisoned for certain criminal offences are released on the condition that they serve in the military. Some individuals have disappeared without any further information about their whereabouts after being arrested by the authorities, and such incidents are becoming frequent.¹⁶ The military authorities have detained young men from bus stops and other public places for conscription.¹⁷ In some cases, young men have been arrested and conscripted by force by the military authorities without receiving an official call-up letter beforehand.¹⁸

The UN has verified the recruitment of 482 children by the Myanmar military from January to December 2024.¹⁹

Conscription takes place irregularly and by force in villages, particularly in rural and border areas. For example, reports exist of military bases demanding that villages provide 10 men each in addition to the official conscription process.²⁰

Since February 2024 and up to June 2025, more than 5,000 Rohingya have reportedly been conscripted by force, with the practice continuing into July 2025 in Sittwe internal displacement camps, nearby villages, and Kyaukphyu, causing many to flee Rakhine State.²¹ Some Rohingya were picked up in night time raids. Even though the Military Service Law stipulates that only citizens can be conscripted, stateless Rohingya are, however, being conscripted as stated above. Only those able to pay military and camp leaders could avoid recruitment. Men, who resisted, faced arrest, beatings, threats, extortion, and detention.²²

After the major earthquake in Myanmar on 28 March 2025,²³ the military only provided assistance to those with connections to the authorities, and there are anecdotal reports of recruitment by force of young people coming out to help in relief efforts.²⁴

¹⁵ The Guardian, *Snatched from their beds, taken on the streets - the young men in Myanmar forced to fight the junta's losing war*, 28 September 2024, [url](#); Helene Kyed DIIS: 5

¹⁶ Helene Kyed DIIS: 5

¹⁷ Aljazeera, *Myanmar's military drafts thousands in first year of conscription drive*, 11 April 2025, [url](#)

¹⁸ Progressive Voice Myanmar, *Monthly Overview: Forced Conscription in Southeastern Burma is Devastating and Destroying Families as the Junta Increases Unlawful Tactics to Recruit Young Men and Women*, 1 September 2025, [url](#)

¹⁹ United Nations, *Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, A/79/878-S/2025/247*, 17 June 2025, [url](#), p. 17

²⁰ CHRO: 2

²¹ OHCHR, *Situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar: update*, 26 September 2025, [url](#), p. 5

²² HRW, *Myanmar: Military Forcibly Recruiting Rohingya*, 9 April 2024, [url](#)

²³ British Red Cross, *Myanmar earthquake 2025: recovery efforts continue after 7.7 magnitude earthquake*, 25 September 2025, [url](#)

²⁴ Helene Kyed DIIS: 14

There have been reports of Myanmar nationals being deported from Thailand and conscripted into the military upon their return in a cooperation between the State Administration Council (SAC) and Thai authorities.²⁵

As of August 2025, CHRO has no knowledge of any cases where conscripts were officially discharged. Instead, individuals are either killed in combat, defect to resistance forces, or remain in indefinite military service. CHRO reported that soldiers are only released if they become physically incapable of fighting (e.g. losing limbs).²⁶ In all other cases, once recruited, conscripts have no realistic prospect of release.²⁷

2.1.1 Exemptions according to the law

Groups who are exempted temporarily from military service according to the law:

- Those who fail to meet medical fitness for military service with recommendation from the military medical examination board;
- Public servants;
- Students;
- Those who are taking care of their helpless aged parents;
- Those who are under medical treatment for drug abuse and;
- Those who are imprisoned.²⁸

Once studies or medical deferments end, the individual remains liable for service until the upper age limit, which is 35 years for men and 27 years for women.²⁹

2.1. Possible consequences of refusing to perform military service

Anyone who fails to join military service without a legitimate reason can be sentenced to prison for up to three years, fined, or both. The law stipulates that anyone who encourages or assists in the violation of military service can be sentenced to up to one year in prison and fined.³⁰ The punishment for falsifying documents (e.g. medical certificates, age falsification) to avoid conscription is prison for up to five years.

²⁵ HRW, *I'll Never Feel Secure – Undocumented and Exploited: Myanmar Nationals in Thailand*, 14 July 2025, [url](#), p. 38

²⁶ CHRO: 5

²⁷ Helene Kyed DIIS: 8; CHRO: 5; Htwe Htwe Thein: 11

²⁸ Burma Library, *People's Military Service Law/State Peace and Development Council Law No. 27/2010*, 4 November 2010, [url](#)

²⁹ CHRO: 15

³⁰ Radio Free Asia, *Myanmar draft-dodgers fear retribution against families*, 5 June 2024, [url](#)

Karen Human Rights Group has reported that villagers who refused or failed to comply with the conscription orders of the SAC faced retaliation in the form of physical violence from soldiers, shootings, threats of arrest and death, enforced disappearances and threats of eviction.³¹

2.2.1 Possible consequences of draft evasion and desertion

CHRO has not documented any cases of imprisonment for draft evasion. Instead, those who resist are conscripted by force, according to their information.³² Desertion and evasion of military service is considered treason and is punished severely, according to Helene Kyed, researcher at the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS).³³

Anecdotal reports indicate that children and other relatives have been arrested when family members evaded service. Some evaders have been imprisoned and then re-enlisted. Some deserters have been reinstated after serving prison terms.³⁴

According to CHRO, captured deserters may face execution or imprisonment.³⁵

Conscript soldiers face prison sentences for desertion, which are consistently enforced.³⁶ Family members are also at risk as the military uses blackmail, threats, and arrests against them.³⁷

In August 2025, a conscripted soldier, who defected to the ethnic Arakan Army, reported seeing military officers executing soldiers who attempted to retreat during frontline combat.³⁸

Families of defectors are often targeted. Some have been arrested, tortured, or detained. Defectors frequently advise their families to flee before they themselves defect, to avoid reprisals for family members.³⁹

2.2.2 Payment of bribes and fines to avoid conscription

Until at least January 2025, it was possible to pay bribes to avoid military service. There have been reports of individuals being forcibly conscripted to the SAC and then paying bribes to avoid military service.⁴⁰ Individuals from poorer families are more likely to be conscripted, as they cannot afford to pay to protect their relatives of conscription age, while wealthier families are better able to avoid conscription through payments.⁴¹

The Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Myanmar Armed Forces publicly acknowledged the existence of corruption in the recruitment process in March 2025. The military authorities have

³¹ Karen Human Rights Group, *Forced to Harm: Impacts of the State Administration Council (SAC)'s forced recruitment and enactment of the conscription law in Southeast Burma (January 2024 – February 2025)*, 31 March 2025, [url](#)

³² CHRO: 10

³³ Helene Kyed DIIS: 12

³⁴ Helene Kyed DIIS: 12

³⁵ CHRO: 13

³⁶ Helene Kyed DIIS: 12

³⁷ Helene Kyed DIIS: 12; Htwe Htwe Thein: 6

³⁸ The Irrawaddy, *Conscript Tells of Brutal Abuses by Myanmar Military Officers*, 8 August 2025, [url](#)

³⁹ CHRO: 14

⁴⁰ Helene Kyed DIIS: 2; Htwe Htwe Thein: 3; CHRO: 12

⁴¹ Helene Kyed DIIS: 3

since 2022 introduced stricter controls, which make it more difficult, but not impossible, to pay bribes.⁴²

Some individuals have personally hired substitutes and sent them to serve military service in their place. According to sources, since January 2025, it has become more difficult to pay one's way out, as the military is in urgent need of recruits. There are reports that it is no longer possible to hire a substitute.⁴³

At the village or ward level, households are sometimes collectively charged fines for failure to serve in the military, typically amounting to 5 million kyat (2,380 USD) per month per village, though this varies by location. In other cases, payments are made at the individual level, either as one-off sums (e.g. 50,000 kyat/24 USD) or as monthly contributions to avoid conscription. Recruitment is not only carried out by the military but also by ethnic armed groups such as the Arakan Army, where sometimes, it is likewise possible to pay to avoid being enlisted. In the Layshi region, fines for failure to serve in the military ranged between 80,000-100,000 kyat (38-48 USD).⁴⁴

When individuals are arrested or abducted during raids, release can in some cases be secured through payment, while others detained by the military simply disappear.⁴⁵

2.3 Quality of training for conscripts

There is little information available about the quality of military training, but deserters report that it is very brief, after which recruits are sent directly to the battlefield.⁴⁶

Officially, conscripts are to receive 3–6 months of basic military training. Sources interviewed by CHRO stated that training is often cut short to 1–2 months, and in some cases only 3–4 weeks, due to urgent needs for frontline deployment.⁴⁷

2.4 Conscripts' duties during service

There are reports of conscripts being assigned the most difficult and dangerous duties, which experienced soldiers are reluctant to carry out, such as being airdropped behind enemy lines.⁴⁸

Furthermore, there are reports of conscripts being involved in burning down civilian houses and destroying civilian property. According to CHRO, defectors reported that orders sometimes explicitly instructed soldiers to burn down houses or kill civilians encountered during military

⁴² CHRO: 12

⁴³ Helene Kyed DIIS: 2

⁴⁴ Helene Kyed DIIS: 3

⁴⁵ Helene Kyed DIIS: 4

⁴⁶ Helene Kyed DIIS: 7; Aljazeera, *Myanmar's military drafts thousands in first year of conscription drive*, 11 April 2025, [url](#); Karen Human Rights Group, *Forced to Harm: Impacts of the State Administration Council (SAC)'s forced recruitment and enactment of the conscription law in Southeast Burma (January 2024 – February 2025)*, 31 March 2025, [url](#)

⁴⁷ CHRO: 6

⁴⁸ Aljazeera, *Myanmar's military drafts thousands in first year of conscription drive*, 11 April 2025, [url](#)

operations. While it is unclear whether such orders are always formally given, conscripts have been observed carrying out these acts.⁴⁹ Conscripts might be asked to torture civilians to collect information from them.⁵⁰

According to several sources, conscripts are ordered to commit attacks on civilians, to commit rape, and to carry out military attacks on children. Attacks on civilian targets are systematic. Credible reports state that conscripts are used as human shields.⁵¹

Conscript soldiers reportedly make up about 70 % of combat units in some areas. CHRO interviewed a captain who admitted that the orders given to his unit amounted to suicide missions against opposition forces in which the military objective of the mission was near impossible to complete, as the majority of his soldiers were inexperienced conscripts. Most of them were captured or killed.⁵²

Some recruits are deployed as local security guards to block resistance movements, monitor communities, and conduct home visits to search for draft evaders or deserters.⁵³

2.5 Conditions inside the military

Conscripts are not recognised as full members of the military. They are referred to by a Burmese term, *pasa* (civilian soldier).⁵⁴ They reportedly face discrimination, humiliation, and sometimes physical abuse from regular soldiers. Testimonies from defectors describe inferior food, harsh living conditions, and discriminatory treatment compared to regular soldiers.⁵⁵

Deserters report systematic violence as part of the military training and harsh punishments for disobedience.⁵⁶ Punishments include bullying, beatings or being sent off to the frontlines where they risk being killed. In some cases, disobeying orders has led to the killing of conscripts.⁵⁷

⁴⁹ CHRO: 8

⁵⁰ Htwe Htwe Thein: 16; The ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights, *APHR Denounces Myanmar's Forced Conscription of Youth, Calls for Urgent International Action*, 19 December 2024, [url](#)

⁵¹ Helene Kyed DIIS: 14; Htwe Htwe Thein: 19; Aljazeera, *Myanmar's military drafts thousands in first year of conscription drive*, 11 April 2025, [url](#); UN News, *'A litany of human suffering' in Myanmar, warns UN rights chief*, 28 February 2025, [url](#); Radio Free Asia, *Human shields and airstrikes used in junta raids on Myanmar jade mining town*, 17 January 2024, [url](#)

⁵² CHRO: 7

⁵³ Helene Kyed DIIS: 7

⁵⁴ CHRO: 9

⁵⁵ CHRO: 9; Helene Kyed DIIS: 14

⁵⁶ Helene Kyed DIIS: 14; Htwe Htwe Thein: 13

⁵⁷ Htwe Htwe Thein: 13; The Irrawaddy, *Conscript Tells of Brutal Abuses by Myanmar Military Officers*, 8 August 2025, [url](#)

2.6 Conscription of women and conditions during military service

In initial statements, the military authorities indicated that women would not be compelled to serve in the military. However, in late January 2025, the authorities announced that registration of women for mandatory military service would commence.⁵⁸

In areas where research has been conducted by DIIS, until January 2025, women had not yet been drafted since the 2024 activation of the conscription law, though reports suggest that they may have been registered for military service. Traditionally, women in Myanmar have not served as combat soldiers but have been assigned cooking or clerical tasks.⁵⁹

According to CHRO, from around batch 9 of the military recruitment batches, the SAC publicly announced the initiation of conscription of women, and the authorities started collecting names of women in families. Women in the military have been observed in training camps, but mainly in medical or logistical roles. Defectors have reported seeing women in training, but not on the frontlines. While the military has announced female recruitment, there is no confirmed evidence of women being recruited and deployed to frontline combat, according to CHRO. Some female relatives of the military authorities are conscripted.⁶⁰

However, subsequent reporting alleges that women have been taken from their homes, subjected to military training, and deployed to conflict-affected areas. The Human Rights Foundation of Monland reported that the SAC began compiling lists of women for military service in Mon State (Mudon, Thanbyuzayat, Northern Ye, Kyaikmayaw, Bilin, and Paung townships), in Tanintharyi Region (Launglon and Yebyu townships in Dawei District), and in Hpa-an, Karen State. During door-to-door raids, the military authorities reportedly take young women, if they fail to find young men for conscription.⁶¹

According to The Myanmar Defense and Security Institute, military training of female conscripts began in June 2025 in Yangon Region.⁶²

Female deserters have reported instances of rape and abuse. Overall, accounts of mistreatment in the military suggest that women are more vulnerable than men because they could encounter sexual violence and harassment.⁶³

⁵⁸ Network for Human Rights Documentation - Burma, *The Enlistment of Women: Gendered Impacts of Forced Conscription by the Military Junta*, 23 April 2025, [url](#), p. 4

⁵⁹ Helene Kyed DIIS: 11

⁶⁰ CHRO: 16

⁶¹ Network for Human Rights Documentation - Burma, *The Enlistment of Women: Gendered Impacts of Forced Conscription by the Military Junta*, 23 April 2025, [url](#), pp. 4, 13

⁶² DVB, *Female military conscripts undergoing training in Yangon*, 15 August 2025, [url](#); MDSI, *Female Military Service Training Being Conducted*, 13 August 2025, [url](#)

⁶³ Helene Kyed DIIS: 11; Network for Human Rights Documentation - Burma, *The Enlistment of Women: Gendered Impacts of Forced Conscription by the Military Junta*, 23 April 2025, [url](#), pp. 12-14

2.7 Prevalence of recruitment into People's Security and Counter-Terrorism Central Committee units

In August 2024, media outlets reported that men up to the age of 65, including disabled persons and veterans, were forcibly recruited to the People's Security and Counter-Terrorism Central Committees.⁶⁴ The recruits are being armed and their main task is to protect villages, towns and cities against rebel militias.⁶⁵

The number of recruits into the People's Security and Counter-Terrorism Central Committees is unknown, though veterans and older village leaders are among those enlisted. Recruitment was initially aimed at loyalists, but it has since expanded to virtually anyone the military chooses.⁶⁶

2.8 Treatment of conscripts based on ethnic group or religious affiliation

Systematic discrimination of minorities exists within the military.⁶⁷ In recent years, Muslims have been particularly vulnerable to abuse within the military. There are also reports of Rohingya being conscripted and forced to fight against the Arakan Army in Rakhine State. Overall, the Bamar remain the group most heavily conscripted.⁶⁸ Christians are reportedly barred from promotion within the military. Some ethnic Chin soldiers have changed their religious affiliation on ID cards to "Buddhist" to avoid discrimination.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Landinfo, *Temanotat Myanmar, Sikkerhets- og menneskerettighetssituasjonen etter militærkuppet i 2021*, 25 August 2025, [url](#), p. 36; Radio Free Asia, *Myanmar junta begins conscripting men up to age 65 to protect towns against rebels*, 5 September 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁵ Free Asia, *Myanmar junta begins conscripting men up to age 65 to protect towns against rebels*, 5 September 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁶ Helene Kyed DIIS: 10

⁶⁷ CHRO: 18

⁶⁸ Helene Kyed DIIS: 15

⁶⁹ CHRO: 18

Myanmar: Major ethnic groups

Myanmar officially recognises 135 ethnic groups but Rohingya Muslims have been rendered stateless and stripped of their citizenship.

ETHNIC GROUPS

- Bamar
- Shan
- Karen
- Rakhine*
- Rohingya
- Kachin
- Chin
- Karenni
- Mon
- Wa
- Kokang Chinese

Ethnic minority states

* Includes other Rakhine Muslim minorities

- Rakhine-Rohingya inter-ethnic conflict
- Conflict area
- Capital

Source: Al Jazeera, agencies, freeburmarangers, Burma - Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity (Martin Smith)



Figure 2: Distribution of ethnic groups in Myanmar⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Al Jazeera, *Myanmar: Major ethnic groups and where they live*, 14 March 2017, [url](#)

3. Return

3.1 Conditions for ethnic Bamar upon return to government-controlled areas of Myanmar

Very few individuals have returned to Myanmar, including ethnic Bamar.⁷¹ There is very little information available about voluntary, individual returns to Myanmar, including what has happened to the few people who have returned.⁷² UNHCR reports that there are obstacles in gathering information from Myanmar, which means many cases of abuse remain undocumented or underreported.⁷³ The academic researcher Htwe Htwe Thein is not aware of any mechanisms to ensure the monitoring and protection of returnees in Myanmar.⁷⁴ The SAC has not always cooperated with UNHCR or other humanitarian organisations in providing protection and assistance to returning refugees.⁷⁵

Returns from neighbouring countries such as India and Malaysia are more common than returns from Europe and North America. Returns from Europe and North America are considered highly suspicious by the authorities and they reportedly regard such individuals as politically motivated asylum seekers and potential traitors.⁷⁶ Some Myanmar nationals return from abroad due to livelihood difficulties, especially from India and Thailand.⁷⁷

Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM)⁷⁸ members are particularly targeted by the authorities, and their names are circulated on blacklists distributed to airports and checkpoints. CHRO has documented cases of returnees being arrested directly at airports and transferred to interrogation centres. Some families have paid large sums to authorities to secure the release of returnees.⁷⁹

The humanitarian situation inside Myanmar has deteriorated since February 2021 as a result of increased conflict, which means that humanitarian access is constrained in many areas.⁸⁰

The Myanmar authorities conduct surveillance of the diaspora living abroad.⁸¹ Individuals returning to Myanmar will sometimes be in possession of two phones since the authorities check phones upon return to search for material or anything connecting these individuals to the opposition. Individuals will therefore return to Myanmar using a “clean phone” without

⁷¹ Htwe Htwe Thein: 20; DIS, *Myanmar, Security situation, return and military service*, 19 august 2024, [url](#), p. 25

⁷² DIS, *Myanmar, Security situation, return and military service*, 19 august 2024, [url](#), p. 25

⁷³ UNHCR, *Guidance Note on the International Protection Needs of People Fleeing Myanmar*, May 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁴ Htwe Htwe Thein: 22

⁷⁵ USDOS, *2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Burma*, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

⁷⁶ CHRO: 21

⁷⁷ CHRO: 19

⁷⁸ Civil Disobedience Movement is a resistance movement inside and outside Myanmar that evolved during the military coup d'état in 2021. Progressive Voice Myanmar, *Civil Disobedience Movement: A Foundation of Myanmar's Spring Revolution and Force Behind Military's Failed Coup*, 25 May 2023, [url](#)

⁷⁹ CHRO: 19

⁸⁰ UNHCR, *Myanmar Situation*, 31 July 2025, [url](#)

⁸¹ Htwe Htwe Thein: 20; DIS, *Myanmar, Security situation, return and military service*, 19 august 2024, [url](#), p. 25

social media apps or contacts in it. If the authorities become aware of pictures from e.g. fundraising events abroad for the opposition, that would pose a risk upon return, if the authorities in Myanmar are able to identify the people in the photo. The academic source knew of one case in which a person returned to Myanmar from overseas to visit their elderly parents. The person in question disappeared upon return.⁸²

Deportations from Malaysia and India to Myanmar have been documented. Some deportees were taken directly to interrogation centres. Some were released after paying bribes, whilst others were detained, conscripted, or disappeared. CHRO has documented the release of three Chin individuals returning from abroad (one from Bangkok, and another two from Malaysia) after paying bribes to the authorities. Around 13 individuals' whereabouts remained unknown after their deportation from India to Myanmar in September 2023.⁸³

⁸² Htwe Htwe Thein: 20

⁸³ CHRO: 20

4. Freedom of movement and exit procedures from Myanmar

4.1. Required permits for Rohingya to travel to the international airport

Stateless Rohingya are required to obtain a travel permission (a so-called Form-4) to leave their township in Rakhine State.⁸⁴

4.2. Freedom of movement for Rohingya from Rakhine State to the international airport

The ability of Rohingya to travel from Rakhine State to the international airport requires the possession of Myanmar citizenship. As mentioned, stateless Rohingya are required to obtain a travel permission (a so-called Form-4) to leave their township in Rakhine State and to leave Rakhine State altogether. As of July 2025, 14 out of 17 townships are no longer under the control of the Myanmar Armed Forces. This has led to the closure of Township Immigration Offices in Rakhine State, making it increasingly difficult for Rohingya to acquire Form-4 permits, as well as obtaining citizenship and national ID documents.⁸⁵

As a result of the freedom of movement restrictions for stateless Rohingya both within and outside of Rakhine State, the International Organisation has observed that stateless Rohingya in most circumstances have to rely on smugglers to flee the armed conflict in Rakhine State.⁸⁶

4.3. Exit procedures from the international airport in Myanmar

Travellers are scrutinised at Yangon International Airport prior to leaving the country.

Passengers leaving through Yangon International Airport must pass through several stages of checks before being allowed to leave Myanmar.

- Firstly, passengers must pass through outer checkpoints at the airport manned by police and military, where luggage and personal items are inspected.
- At the second stage of checks, passengers will reach the police investigation desk. Travellers are asked to declare their personal valuables such as wedding rings or jewellery. At this stage, individuals are questioned and asked to show travel documents and return tickets.
- At the third stage of checks, passengers are met by immigration officers. At this stage, phones and laptops are checked extensively, and officers examine social media usage,

⁸⁴ International Organisation: 18

⁸⁵ International Organisation: 4, 18-19

⁸⁶ International Organisation: 19

messages, and photographs. Deleted data from an electronic device may be recovered by the authorities as well.⁸⁷

Immigration officers have access to electronic blacklists containing names of individuals who are excluded from leaving Myanmar. Individuals affiliated with the CDM or resistance movements are placed on blacklists. When their passports are scanned, the system notifies the immigration officers.⁸⁸

Many passengers are denied exit despite having valid documents. Young people are often rejected on suspicion of fleeing conscription.⁸⁹

4.4. Tighter exit restrictions for individuals of military age

Exiting Myanmar has become increasingly difficult, especially for young men of conscription age. The government introduced tighter restrictions before the planned December 2025 elections to prevent youths from leaving. Restrictions and prohibitions of youths leaving areas under the control of the Myanmar military began in early August 2025, especially in Hakha and Tedim Township of Chin State.⁹⁰

4.5. Prevalence of corruption at the international airport when exiting Myanmar

According to CHRO, VIP passes, which allow for a smoother exit through Myanmar's international airport in Yangon, are available upon payment for those who can afford it.⁹¹ Families of detained individuals may be contacted by the authorities and asked to pay a bribe for the release of their detained relatives at the airport.⁹²

⁸⁷ CHRO: 22; Htwe Htwe Thein: 26; Asia Democracy Chronicles, *The narrowing way out*, 6 December 2024, [url](#)

⁸⁸ CHRO: 22-23; The Diplomat, *Myanmar's Civil Disobedience Movement, From the Inside*, 26 November 2024, [url](#); The Irrawaddy, *The Long History of Myanmar's Civil Disobedience Movement*, 29 March 2021, [url](#)

⁸⁹ CHRO: 24

⁹⁰ CHRO: 21

⁹¹ CHRO: 25

⁹² CHRO: 24; Asia Democracy Chronicles, *The narrowing way out*, 6 December 2024, [url](#)

5. Issuance of documents to Rohingya

5.1. Procedures for issuance of official documents

Access to official documents for the Rohingya is very restricted. Generally speaking, there are both legal and practical obstacles for Rohingya to obtain legal identity documents.⁹³

Myanmar's 1982 Citizenship Law and the way in which it is applied exclude many non-recognised ethnic groups and particularly the Rohingya from accessing citizenship and thus official documents.⁹⁴

According to the international organisation, the 1982 Citizenship Law ultimately leaves the decision to grant one of the three types of citizenship in Myanmar to the Central Body located in Myanmar's capital Nay Pyi Taw. The types of citizenship, which can be granted to the Rohingya, are either "full" citizenship, naturalised citizenship or associate citizenship.⁹⁵

According to the 1982 law on citizenship, the Central Body is comprised of a Minister Chairman Ministry of Home Affairs, a Minister Member Ministry of Defence, and a Minister Member Ministry of Foreign Affairs, all appointed by Myanmar Council of Ministers. The international organisation noted that the application process involves a number of different steps and consequently requires a significant amount of time to be completed for the applicant.⁹⁶

In order for Rohingya to gain access to legal identity documents, they are required to apply for citizenship before applying for a citizenship scrutiny card, which is the official ID card for Myanmar citizens, in accordance with Section 65 of the 1982 Citizenship Law. The process for obtaining citizenship is multi-layered. The international organisation noted that the number of steps that applicants need to follow may vary, also depending on their ability to pay bribes to the Myanmar authorities. The stateless Rohingya do not acquire citizenship by birth and cannot directly apply for a citizenship scrutiny card.⁹⁷

5.2. Procedures for issuance of official ID cards

Three types of citizenship scrutiny cards exist in Myanmar, which function as ID cards. Each card is issued in accordance with the type of citizenship. "Full" citizenship (CSC, "Pink Card"), naturalised citizenship (NCSC, "Green Card") and associate citizenship (ACSC, "Blue Card"). Both associate and naturalised citizenship can be revoked. Individuals with these types of citizenship may face restrictions on certain political rights and with accessing some public services, such as running for public office and accessing certain professional studies. According to the international organisation's knowledge, only a limited number of Rohingya were able to acquire

⁹³ International Organisation: 1-2

⁹⁴ International Organisation: 1-2; DFAT, *Country information report Myanmar*, 7 April 2025, [url](#), p. 16

⁹⁵ International Organisation: 7

⁹⁶ International Organisation: 7; Government of Myanmar, *Burma Citizenship Law*, 15 October 1982, [url](#)

⁹⁷ International Organisation: 7

citizenship and obtain national ID cards recently. When able, they had to pay costly bribes to the authorities.⁹⁸

The process of acquiring citizenship begins at the local Township Immigration Office. However, escalating armed conflict between the Myanmar Armed Forces and the Arakan Army in Rakhine State in 2025 has made it increasingly difficult for Rohingya to apply for citizenship and obtain national ID documents. This stems from the government's loss of territory in the state, which is due to the ongoing conflict. As a result, many Township Immigration Offices in Rakhine State have been forced to close.⁹⁹

Step 1:

As a first step, applicants must appear in person at the Township Immigration Office to submit the application for a decision on citizenship. A Township Immigration official completes the citizenship application form. The next step in the process is for the application to be reviewed by the Township Verification Board.¹⁰⁰

The Township Verification Board consists of representatives from various governmental departments from both township and district level. Once the Township Verification Board has reviewed the documents, the application is sent back to the Township Immigration Office, which will then submit it to the District and/or State Immigration Office.¹⁰¹

Step 2:

The District and/or State Immigration Office will review the application. The State Immigration Office will either submit the application directly to the Central Body in Nay Pyi Taw or first submit it to the State Verification Board for review. If the application is approved by the Central Body, the Director General of the Immigration Ministry in Nay Pyi Taw will issue an approval letter.¹⁰²

Step 3:

If the Central Body approves the issuance of a CSC, the Township Immigration Office will issue it. If the Central Body approves an NCSC, the Township Immigration Office will invite the applicant to provide additional information, such as recommendation letters. The Township Immigration Office will then submit the approved case to the Central Body through the State Immigration Office. At the end of the process, the Township Immigration Office will hand out the NCSC to the applicant.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ International Organisation: 14-15

⁹⁹ International Organisation: 3-4, 8

¹⁰⁰ International Organisation: 9

¹⁰¹ International Organisation: 10

¹⁰² International Organisation: 11

¹⁰³ International Organisation: 12

5.3. Prevalence of forged or illicit documents

Document fraud is prevalent in Myanmar. The prevalence of corruption allows for fake identity documentation to be purchased relatively easy. Travelling either outside a township or across international borders without travel documents or with forged documents is considered a criminal offence under Myanmar law. Offenders travelling within Myanmar without travel documents or with forged documents are usually sentenced to two years' imprisonment, while international travelling with a forged document usually is punished with five years' imprisonment if apprehended by the authorities.¹⁰⁴

5.4. Issuance procedures for election polling cards

According to NGOs monitoring elections in Myanmar, the Myanmar authorities do not issue election polling cards as such. Instead, the Union Election Commission (UEC) is responsible for preparing voter lists by collecting data from the population registries maintained by the General Administration Department and the Ministry of Immigration and Population. The UEC also conducts door-to-door voter registration in townships where elections will be held. According to a press release by the UEC in 2021, Myanmar citizens with either full, associate or naturalised citizenship, or holders of a temporary certificate are eligible to vote.¹⁰⁵ To participate in the election, a Myanmar citizen must have turned 18 years of age on the day of the election to be eligible to vote and not violate legal rules governing elections in Myanmar. Reports indicate that laws, which limit the citizenship status of minority groups, also limit the rights of minority groups to participate in the political process.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ International Organisation: 5, 19; DFAT, *Country Information report Myanmar*, 7 April 2025, [url](#), p. 47

¹⁰⁵ A temporary certificate is also known as a Temporary Approval Card (TAC) or a *white card receipt*. The legal basis of this card is unclear, and it does not confer any citizenship rights according to DFAT; The Rohingya Post, *The Rohingya and the White Cards Saga*, 5 April 2019, [url](#); DFAT, *Country Information report Myanmar*, 7 April 2025, [url](#), p. 45

¹⁰⁶ ANFREL, *Myanmar Junta's Planned Elections: Falling Short of Democratic Legitimacy*, 30 September 2025, [url](#), p. 49; Merin, *How do I vote?*, n.d., [url](#); Global New Light of Myanmar, *Union Election Commission Press Release*, 12 February 2021, [url](#); USDOS, *2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Burma*, 22 April 2024, [url](#)

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Annex 1: Meeting minutes

Online meeting with staff members of an International Organisation working on Myanmar, 21 July 2025

Procedures for issuance of official documents to Rohingyas

Background:

1. Rohingyas have faced decades of marginalisation and discrimination in Myanmar and are still facing ongoing human rights violations and thus access to official documents for the Rohingyas is very restricted. Generally speaking, there are both legal and practical obstacles for Rohingyas to obtain legal identity documents.
2. The 1982 Citizenship Law and the way in which the law is applied in Myanmar exclude many non-recognised ethnic groups and particularly the Rohingyas from accessing citizenship.
3. Secondly, in terms of more recent developments, the escalating armed conflict between the Myanmar Armed Forces and the Arakan Army in Rakhine State has had a negative impact on the access to identity documents and citizenship for Rohingyas.
4. As of July 2025, 14 out of 17 Townships are no longer under the control of the Myanmar Armed Forces. This has led to the closure of Township Immigration Offices in Rakhine State, which made it increasingly difficult for Rohingyas to acquire citizenship and obtain national ID documents.
5. According to the international organisation's knowledge, only a limited number of Rohingyas were able to acquire citizenship and obtain national ID cards recently; they had to pay high unofficial fees.

Acquisition of citizenship and issuance of citizenship scrutiny cards to Rohingyas

6. The 1982 Citizenship Law defines three types of citizenship. This includes "full" citizenship (Citizenship Scrutiny Card, "Pink Card"), associate citizenship (Associate Citizenship Scrutiny Card, "Blue Card") and naturalised citizenship (Naturalised Citizenship Scrutiny Card, "Green Card"). With each type of citizenship comes a different type of citizenship scrutiny card, which serves as a national ID card.
7. The Rohingyas do not acquire citizenship by birth and cannot directly apply for a citizenship scrutiny card. In order for Rohingyas to gain access to legal identity documents, they are required to apply for a decision on citizenship beforehand in accordance with Section 65 of the 1982 Citizenship Law. This is a multi-layered process. The international organisation noted that the number of steps that applicants need to follow may vary, also depending on their ability to pay unofficial fees. The 1982 Citizenship Law leaves the decision to grant either "full" citizenship, naturalised citizenship or associate citizenship to the Central Body located in the capital Nay Pyi

Taw (Chapter VI of the 1982 Citizenship Law). The international organisation noted that the process takes a long time to complete and includes a number of different steps.

8. The process for acquiring citizenship always starts at the local Township Immigration Office. The change in areas of control and closure of Township Immigration Offices in Rakhine State has made it increasingly difficult for Rohingyas to apply for a decision on citizenship and subsequently national identity documents.
9. As a first step, applicants must appear in person at the Township Immigration Office to submit the application for a decision on citizenship. A Township Immigration Official completes the citizenship application form. The next step in the process is for the application to be reviewed by the Township Verification Board.
10. The Township Verification Board consists of various governmental departments from both the township- and the district level. Once the Township Verification Board has reviewed the documents, the application is sent back to the Township Immigration Office, which will then submit it to the District and/or State Immigration Office.
11. The District and/or State Immigration Office will review the application. The State Immigration Office will either submit the application directly to the Central Body in Nay Pyi Taw or first submit the application to the State Verification Board for review. If the application is approved by the Central Body, the Director General of the Immigration Ministry in Nay Pyi Taw will issue an approval letter.

Issuance of citizenship scrutiny cards

12. If the Central Body approves the issuance of a Citizenship Scrutiny Card (CSC), the Township Immigration Office will issue the CSC. If the Central Body approves a Naturalised Citizenship Scrutiny Card (NCSC), then the Township Immigration Office will invite the applicant to provide additional information, such as recommendation letters. The Township Immigration Office will then submit the approved case to the Central Body through the State Immigration Office. At the end of the process, the Township Immigration Office will hand out the NCSC to the applicant.
13. The international organisation stated that acquiring citizenship and obtaining citizenship scrutiny cards is a long and burdensome process for Rohingyas. With the closure of Township Immigration Offices in Rakhine State as a result of the conflict between the Myanmar Armed Forces and the Arakan Army, it has become virtually impossible for Rohingyas who do not have significant financial means to acquire citizenship.

Prevalence of issuance of citizenship scrutiny cards to Rohingyas

14. As set out above, three types of citizenship scrutiny cards exist in Myanmar. Each card is issued in accordance with the type of citizenship. “Full” citizenship (CSC, “Pink Card”), naturalised citizenship (NCSC, “Green Card”) and associate citizenship (ACSC, “Blue Card”). Both associate and naturalised citizenship can be revoked and individuals with these types of citizenship may face restrictions on certain political rights and on access

to some public services, such as running for public office and accessing certain professional studies.

15. In the past, some Rohingyas were able to obtain “full” citizenship and obtained CSCs. It is now more common for Rohingyas to be issued NCSCs.
16. According to the knowledge of the international organisation, only very few Rohingyas have been able to acquire citizenship recently. They have only been able to obtain NCSCs, irrespective of whether or not they were able to trace their ancestry in Myanmar.

Issuance procedure of Identity Card for National Verification (ICNV)

17. An ICNV is not a citizenship scrutiny card and does not have a legal basis. The introduction of the ICNV was based on an announcement made in 2015 by the then president of Myanmar. The ICNV is one of the supporting documents to apply for a decision on citizenship. Applicants must provide the household list and a recommendation letter from the Ward/Village Tract Administrator to obtain an ICNV.

Freedom of movement restrictions that Rohingyas are facing

18. Whether or not it is possible for Rohingyas to travel from Rakhine State depends on whether or not they hold citizenship. Stateless Rohingyas are required to obtain a travel permission (a so-called Form-4) to leave their township in Rakhine State. While always a burdensome process, obtaining a Form-4 has become even more difficult due to the closure of Township Immigration Offices.
19. As a result of the discriminatory freedom of movement restrictions both within and outside of Rakhine State, the international organisation has observed that stateless Rohingyas in practice almost always have to rely on smugglers to flee armed conflict and persecution in Rakhine State. Travelling outside a township or crossing international borders without or with forged travel documents are criminal offences under Myanmar law. Offenders travelling within Myanmar without or with forged documents are usually sentenced to two years imprisonment, while international travelling is usually punished with 5 years’ imprisonment.

Online meeting with Helene Kyed, Senior Researcher at Danish Institute for International Studies, 18 August 2025

1. There are no verified figures on how many have been recruited for military service since February 2024. However, it can be concluded that in military-controlled areas recruitment is systematic. Individuals are recruited at the *ward level*, which refers to smaller administrative units of urban areas. It has become institutionalized that Ward Administrative Leaders in towns and Village Administrative Leaders in rural areas must ensure that every household is registered and that the ages of family members are recorded.
2. Until at least January 2025, it was possible to pay to avoid military service. There have been reports of individuals being forcibly conscripted to the SAC and then paying bribes

avoid military service. Some individuals have personally hired substitutes and sent them to serve in their place. Reports from regions such as Hinthada, Klaym, Magway, Patheingyi, Taunggyi, Taungoo and Thingangyun estimate that the prices for hiring substitutes to conduct one's military service typically range from five to 10,000 Kyat, with figures in Kalay, Taunggyi region typically ranging between 10,000-20,000 Kyat. According to sources, since January it has become more difficult to pay one's way out, as the military is in urgent need of recruits. There are reports that it is no longer possible to hire a substitute.

3. At the village or ward level, households are sometimes collectively charged "fines for failure to serve in the military," typically amounting to 5 million kyat per month per village, though this varies by location. In other cases, payments are made at the individual level, either as one-off sums (e.g. 50,000 kyat) or as monthly contributions to avoid conscription. Recruitment is not only carried out by the military but also by ethnic armed groups such as the Arakan Army, where it is likewise sometimes possible to pay to avoid being enlisted. In the Layshi region the fines for failure to serve in the military ranged between 80,000-100,000 kyat. The poor are most at risk, as they cannot afford to pay to protect their children, while wealthier families are better able to avoid conscription through payments.
4. Another form of payment arises when people are arrested or abducted during raids. In some cases, payment can secure release, though others who are detained by the military simply disappear.
5. Since the activation of the conscription law, civilians are increasingly being arbitrarily and unlawfully detained, sometimes from their own homes, without cause or due process. Travelers or passersby are being stopped, taken away, and forcibly conscripted into the military. In some cases, people are extorted for money, and those previously detained for certain offenses are granted amnesty and forced to serve in the military. It is also said that some individuals have disappeared without any further information about their whereabouts after being arrested, and such incidents are becoming frequent.
6. As the SAC's territorial control has diminished, it has reportedly increased violent reprisals against civilians. In one case in Launglon, Tanintharyi Region, SAC soldiers threatened two villagers at gunpoint to disclose the whereabouts of members of People's Defence Forces (PDFs). The villagers directed them to a random house out of fear, after which soldiers raided the property, arresting six individuals. About a month later, the bodies of the detainees were reportedly found in a nearby well. The two villagers who had pointed out the house were later killed.
7. There is little information about military training, but deserters report that it is very brief, after which recruits are sent directly to the battlefield. Some recruits are instead deployed as local security guards to block resistance movements, monitor communities, and conduct home visits to search for draft evaders or deserters.
8. Conscription is not for one or two years but effectively for life. Deserters emphasize that leaving military service is extremely difficult, and conscription can last indefinitely.

9. Recruitment most systematically targets young people up to the age of 35, though all residents in military-controlled areas live in fear of being drafted.
10. The number of recruits into the newly established Security and Counter-Terrorism Central Committees is unknown, though veterans and older village leaders are among those enlisted. The military is desperate, attempting to involve the entire community while simultaneously instilling fear and anxiety. Recruitment was initially aimed at loyalists, but it has since expanded to virtually anyone the military chooses.
11. There are rumors that the military has begun recruiting women. In areas where research has been conducted, women have not yet been drafted since the 2024 activation of the conscription law, though reports suggest they may have been registered for possible service. Traditionally, women in Myanmar have not served as combat soldiers but have been assigned cooking or clerical tasks. Female deserters report experiences of rape and abuse. Overall, accounts of mistreatment in the military suggest that women are even more vulnerable than men.
12. Two very high-ranking officers were sentenced to death in 2023 during Operation 27 for failing to resist the takeover of an area close to the Chinese border by resistance forces. The higher the rank, the harsher the punishment for disobedience. Desertion or evasion of military service is considered treason and punished severely. Lower-ranking soldiers face prison sentences for desertion, which are consistently enforced. Family members are also at risk: the military uses blackmail, threats, and arrests against them. Anecdotal reports indicate that children and relatives have been arrested when family members evaded service. Some evaders have been imprisoned and then re-enlisted, while deserters have been reinstated after serving prison terms.
13. The military's approach does not strengthen legitimacy or loyalty. Fear of forced recruitment has made people reluctant to move around.
14. Deserters also report systematic violence as part of training and brutal punishments for disobedience. Conditions for low-ranking soldiers are extremely poor: they are given inadequate food and subjected to violence from superiors. Patron–client relationships within the military are often based on coercion and abuse. Conscripts are ordered to commit atrocities including attacks on civilians, burning villages, rape, and military attacks on children. Attacks on civilian targets are systematic. During the earthquake, the military only provided assistance to those with connections, and there are anecdotal reports of forced recruitment when young people came out to help in relief efforts. Credible reports state that conscripts are used as *human shields*.
15. In recent years, Muslims have been particularly vulnerable to abuse within the military. There are also reports of Rohingya being conscripted and forced to fight against the Arakan Army in Rakhine State. Overall, the Bamar remain the group most heavily recruited.

Online meeting with Htwe Htwe Thein, Associate Professor, Curtin University, an academic researcher working on Myanmar, 18 July 2025

1. The military is getting more nervous and more desperate, so there are more crackdowns and air raids are happening almost every day. The military is stepping up its violence leading up to the elections in September, this includes area bombings, arrest and punishment to those who refused to be conscripted. The conscription procedure is now riddled with corruption. Those who come and arrest individuals for conscription can be paid off. As a result, those with financial means can pay off the authorities not to be conscripted while others who don't have the financial resources get conscripted.
2. For a short period following the earthquake in March 2025 they did allow a bit more people into the country but it quickly all tightened up again with the elections coming. So, they vet who wants to come in and they are careful who will be allowed in.

Military service and consequences of draft evasion and desertion

3. If the local authorities come to grab you for military service, you have two choices; you either pay them off so they will let you go because conscription also serves as a corruption tool. If they see your son is of the age where he can be conscripted the military will keep you paying bribes.
4. If an individual can't pay bribes, the military will forcefully conscript an individual. If an individual that can't pay a bribe decides to evade conscription, such individuals will tend to evade conscription by running away, in order to evade conscription. Some students, if their parents can afford to get them to study abroad, will keep studying master degree after master degree because they just can't go home due to the fear of being forcefully conscripted.
5. Wealthier individuals of conscription age, who can afford to pay bribes can continue living a civilian and affluent lifestyle but the poorer individuals of conscription age, are the ones that are being conscripted by the military. The military is losing its manpower and is focusing on fighting rather than on developing the military skills of conscripts.
6. If individuals have successfully evaded conscription the military has employed collective punishment techniques against the families of evading individuals by beating up family members of evading individuals. The academic source has seen examples of such corporal punishments of this on social media.
7. The military can have trouble finding draft evaders because not everyone has a proper address or is registered at an address in Myanmar.

Consequences of desertion:

8. Many soldiers and conscripts are afraid of defecting from their military service due to fears of how the military might punish their families, who are living in government-controlled areas.
9. According to information available to the source, deserters will risk execution or life imprisonment for deserting the armed forces of Myanmar. According to the source this policy is being enforced by the military.
10. In order to prevent desertions, the Myanmar military has sometimes imprisoned family members of military personnel, even children at times, for instance pilots in charge of transporting high ranking military leaders as political prisoners, in order to discourage these pilots from defecting from the military.
11. Military service can be indefinite in the Myanmar armed forces. It depends how useful a soldier is for how long they will be serving for. For instance, doctors and engineers once conscripted are probably treated a little bit better than those without special skills. They will stay conscripted for as long as the military need them and the military is in need of manpower. So once an individual is conscripted, they will be released from military service, unless they can pay bribes.
12. Even military prisoners who can pay get better food, more water for showers and better sleeping conditions and so on. Before the coup in 2021 serving in the military used to be a quite prestigious and lucrative job in Myanmar because it could lead to jobs in ministries where individuals could benefit from corruption. Since the coup many people refuse to join the military and the Military currently is in need of soldiers with technical skills. People under 35 are unlikely to have these technical skills which is why they might have increased the service age for some individuals with specific skills up to 65 years of age, although the source had not heard of men up to the age of 65 being recruited into the units of the so-called People's Security and Counterterrorism Central Committee.

Punishment of conscripts:

13. The conscripts are not well trained and they are subjected to different kinds of punishments while they perform their military service. Conscripts might get sent straight to the front line and get killed because these young people are the ones that the military do not like because they know many young people are anti-military (opposition). They are very likely to be sent directly to the frontline and get killed. The training of conscripts is not proper and not very long. The conscripts have to obey their superiors and face a lot of punishments during their military service. Punishments can include; bullying, beatings, being sent off to the frontlines where they are certain to die of attacks or diseases. Talking back to superiors or resisting commands can result in punishments for conscripts. In some cases, disobeying orders have led to the killing of conscripts.
14. On social media the source has seen conscripts who were shirtless and not wearing any footwear with torn clothes and who are living in very minimal equipped and run-down military facilities or camps.

15. Conscripts have participated in human rights violations against the civilian population while serving in the military.
16. Torture and beatings of the conscripts is a widespread phenomenon in the Myanmar armed forces. Torturing is very much part of the military's strategy in targeting the civilian population. The conscripts might be asked to torture someone to get information from civilians or civilians suspected of belonging to opposition groups.
17. Conscripts have also participated, under duress, in torturing captured rebel fighters to extract information from them.
18. The source was aware of examples of conscripts being asked to perform tasks, which they refused to do, and as a consequence got tortured while serving in the military. Torture and beatings happen on a regular basis if conscripts do not follow orders, according to the source.
19. The source stated that some poorly trained and equipped conscripts have been used as human shields on the battlefield in the fighting against opposition forces. The Myanmar military have sometimes used this practice to send a message to families of conscripts and to intimidate and make an example of these conscripts to the villages and townships where they are from. At other times conscripts have simply been used as human-shields as a way for the army to get rid of soldiers the military did not trust.

Issues of return to Myanmar for ethnic Bamar

20. First of all, it is very dangerous to return, so a very little number of individuals have been returning to Myanmar. Those who return do not fear reprisals from the government because they have connections or relations to the people in the Myanmar government, which is only a very small number of the people that have left Myanmar.
21. According to information available to the source the Myanmar authorities conduct surveillance of the diaspora living abroad and thus people returning to Myanmar will sometimes have two phones since the authorities check individuals' phones upon return to search for material or links people affiliated to the opposition. People will therefore travel back to Myanmar using a "clean phone" without social media apps or contacts in it. If the authorities become aware of pictures from e.g. fundraising events abroad for the opposition that would pose a risk upon return if the authorities in Myanmar are able to identify the people in the photo. The academic source knew of one case in which a person returned to Myanmar from overseas to visit the individual's elderly parents and who disappeared upon return.
22. The source was not aware of any mechanisms to ensure the monitoring of and protection of returnees in Myanmar, unless individuals are able to bribe the authorities to ensure being protected from persecution. The Academic source was of the opinion that the Myanmar government was not interested in providing this.
23. The Myanmar authorities will employ a greater degree of scrutiny on individuals returning from western countries such as European countries and Australia, that might have imposed sanctions on the Myanmar government, compared individuals returning from neighboring countries, such as Thailand Malaysia or Singapore for instance. The Myanmar authorities will check what returnees are bringing back into the country,

and go through their luggage and phones upon return. This is in part because it is not possible to arrange any protest against the Myanmar government in these neighboring countries, as opposed to western countries where support of and donations to the opposition in Myanmar is possible. The Myanmar authorities are collecting intelligence on the diaspora for instance by the monitoring of social media.

24. Any individual returning to Myanmar would be in danger of many things, including being taken away for questioning upon return, being charged with made-up offences, or simply just disappearing. Only those who have close connections with the military authority have dared to return. The academic source underlined the arbitrariness and unpredictable treatment returnees could face by the authorities upon return to Myanmar.

Exit procedures from Myanmar

25. Yangon international airport is the only functioning international airport in Myanmar. The freedom of movement for Rohingya within Myanmar is very restricted. It is not possible for Rohingyas to travel from Rakhine state to the international airport in Yangon, due to freedom of movement restriction imposed on Rohingyas by the Myanmar authorities.
26. Travelers are scrutinized at the International Airport prior to leaving the country. Travelers are asked to declare their personal valuables such as wedding rings or jewelry at the international airport. As of July, and August 2025, there is heightened scrutiny and control on everything that travelers are bringing out of Myanmar. Lengthy procedures of questioning occur with regard to where the person is going and where they have been in the country upon leaving. If travelers exiting Myanmar are not able to inform the authorities of a cohesive explanation of their whereabouts they could risk being banned from leaving the country.

Online Meeting with Chin Human Rights Organization CHRO, 4 September 2025

1. According to CHRO, estimates suggest that between 70,000 and 80,000 individuals have been recruited since the enforcement of the conscription law in February 2024. The military has officially acknowledged launching 15 conscription drives or so-called batches so far. Each batch was reported in the media to consist of approximately 5,000 recruits, which would total around 75,000 in total. The scale of recruitment may be considerably larger.

2. While official announcements have been made through state-controlled newspapers and military media, CHRO emphasized that these figures likely understate the actual number. Recruitment also takes place informally and forcibly in villages, particularly in rural and border areas. For example, reports exist of military bases demanding that villages provide 10 men each, in addition to the official conscription process. The military usually publishes which batch they are launching in newspapers.

3. Some Rohingya have also been recruited in northern Rakhine State, suggesting that minorities are not exempt from these practices.
4. The law stipulates that ordinary conscripts serve two years, while “skilled personnel” (such as those with technical training) may be required to serve three years.
5. As the law has only been active since 2024, no conscripts have yet completed the full two-year period. CHRO has no knowledge of any cases where conscripts were officially discharged at the end of their service. Instead, individuals are either killed in combat, defect to resistance forces, or remain in indefinite military service. Defectors reported that soldiers are only released if they become physically incapable of fighting (e.g. losing limbs). In all other cases, once recruited, conscripts have no realistic prospect of release.
6. Officially, conscripts are to receive 3–6 months of basic military training. Multiple sources, including defectors interviewed by CHRO, stated that training is often cut short to 1–2 months, and in some cases only 3–4 weeks, due to urgent needs for frontline deployment.
7. Conscript soldiers reportedly make up about 70% of combat units in some areas. CHRO interviewed a captain who admitted that the orders given to his unit amounted to “suicide missions” against opposition forces in which the military objective of the mission for near impossible to complete, as the majority of his soldiers were inexperienced conscripts. Most of them were captured or killed.
8. There are reports of conscripts being involved in burning down civilian houses, destroying civilian property, and attacking civilians. According to CHRO, defectors reported that orders sometimes explicitly instructed soldiers to burn down houses or kill civilians encountered during military operations. While it is unclear whether such orders are always formally given, conscripts have been observed carrying out these acts.
9. Conscripts are not recognized as full members of the military. They are referred to by a Burmese term, *pasa* (“civilian soldier”). They reportedly face discrimination, humiliation, and sometimes physical abuse from regular soldiers. Testimonies from defectors and detainees describe inferior food, harsh living conditions, and unequal treatment compared to regular soldiers.
10. The conscription law prescribes 3 years’ imprisonment for refusal to serve and up to 5 years for falsifying documents (e.g. medical certificates, age falsification) to avoid conscription. CHRO has not documented any cases of imprisonment for draft evasion. Instead, those who resist are forcibly conscripted.
11. Recruitment is happening by force by military sweeps, street arrests, or house-to-house checks.

12. Families frequently pay bribes to avoid conscription. Reported amounts range from 100 USD to 800 USD, depending on the location and circumstances. The deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Myanmar armed forces has publicly acknowledged corruption in the recruitment process in March 2025. The military authorities have since 2022 introduced stricter controls which make it more difficult but not impossible to pay bribes.

13. Desertion is punished harshly. Captured deserters may face execution or imprisonment.

14. Families of defectors are often targeted. Some have been arrested, tortured, or detained. Defectors frequently advise their families to flee before desertion, to avoid reprisals.

15. Groups who are exempted from military service:

- Students between the ages of 18-25 years of age
- Religious personnel
- Individuals with medical conditions
- Migrant workers

These exemptions are temporary, not permanent. Once studies or medical deferments end, the individual remains liable for service until the age limit (35 years for men, 27 years for women).

16. From around batch 9, the military publicly announced the start of recruitment of women and the authorities started collecting names of women in families. Women have been observed in training camps, but mainly in medical or logistical roles. Defectors have reported seeing women in training, but not on the frontlines. Some female detainees have been released after intervention from religious leaders and family payments, suggesting attempts at recruitment that may not have proceeded. Some female relatives of the military authorities are conscripted. While the military has acknowledged female recruitment, there is no confirmed evidence of women being forcefully recruited and deployed to frontline combat.

17. Conscription is concentrated in Bamar-majority areas. Recruitment in ethnic minority regions is rare due to lack of trust and widespread control by resistance groups.

18. Systematic discrimination exists within the military. Christians are reportedly barred from promotion within the military. Some Chin soldiers have changed their religious affiliation on ID cards to “Buddhist” to avoid discrimination.

Exit and Return

19. Some Myanmar nationals return from abroad due to livelihood difficulties, especially from India and Thailand. Returns are fewer from Europe and North America. Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) members are particularly at risk, as their names are circulated on blacklists distributed to airports and checkpoints. CHRO documented cases of returnees being arrested directly at airports and transferred to interrogation centers. Some families paid large sums to authorities to secure the release of returnees.

20. Deportations from Malaysia and India have been documented. Some deportees were taken directly to interrogation centers. Outcomes vary: some were released after paying bribes, others were detained, conscripted, or disappeared. CHRO has documented the release of three Chin-individuals returning from abroad (one from Bangkok, and another two from Malaysia) after paying bribes to the authorities. Around 13 peoples whereabouts remained unknown after their deportation from India in September 2023.

21. Returns from neighboring countries (India, Malaysia) are relatively common. Returns from Europe or North America are considered highly suspicious. Authorities reportedly regard such individuals as politically motivated asylum seekers and potential traitors. Exiting Myanmar has become increasingly difficult, especially for young men of conscription age. The government introduced tighter restrictions before the planned December 2025 elections, to prevent youth from leaving. Restrictions and prohibitions of youths leaving areas under the control of the Myanmar military began in early August 2025, especially in Hakha and Tedim Township of Chin State.

22. Passengers leaving through Yangon International Airport must pass several stages of checks:

- Outer checkpoints manned by police and military, where luggage and personal items are inspected.
- Police investigations desk, where individuals are questioned and asked to show travel documents and return tickets.
- Immigration officers, who have access to electronic blacklists.

Phones and laptops are checked extensively. Even deleted data may be recovered, and officers examine social media usage, messages, and photographs.

23. Individuals affiliated with the CDM or resistance movements are placed on blacklists. When their passports are scanned, the system notifies officers. One way in which one can be removed from black list is by paying bribes. Bribes can be paid in the following way: The

military receives a list of people (typically CMD'ers). Most CMD'ers have been arrested at the airport upon leaving the country, thus CDM'ers approach immigration officers in Rangoon prior to their departure and pay bribes to have their name removed from said list. After being informed of their names having been deleted, people normally depart through the airport.

24. Many passengers are denied exit despite having valid documents. Young people are often rejected on suspicion of fleeing conscription. Some are detained and interrogated. Families may be contacted to pay for release.

25. "VIP-passes" are available for payment, allowing smoother exit for those who can afford it. There are no particular restrictions for attaining a VIP-pass, with an agent who can facilitate VIP pass, anyone can secure a VIP-pass.

Annex 2: Terms of Reference

1. Military service

- 1.1. Possible consequences of refusing to perform military service
- 1.2. Conscripts' duties during service

2. Return

- 2.1. Conditions for ethnic Burmese upon return to government-controlled areas of Myanmar

3. Exit procedures

- 3.1. Exit procedures from international airports in Myanmar

4. Rohingya - Issuance of documents

- 4.1. Procedures for issuance of official documents to Rohingyas
 - 4.1.1. Procedures for issuance of official ID-cards
 - 4.1.2. Procedures for issuance of Election polling cards
- 4.2. Prevalence of forged or illicit documents issued to Rohingyas in Myanmar